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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7174  
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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Aftermath of Larijani Visit to Ankara  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others: During his meetings in Ankara on Monday, Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani warned Turkish officials that the measures applied against Iran today could be applied against Turkey tomorrow. Larijani argued that the West had launched a Crusade and that Turkey had to support Iran. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said Larijani had been urged to pursue realistic policies and to stay close to the international community. Gul stressed there were already many problems in the region and that Iran should not exaggerate the disagreements. Mainstream papers comment Larijani tried to win the support of Turkish government against the US, but instead received sharp warnings from Turks who have made a clear determination to act in line with UN resolutions with respect to Tehran's nuclear program. Ankara told Larijani that Iran would be isolated if it refuses to abandon the program.

Papers say the 18-page letter sent by President Ahmadinejad to President Bush did not mention the nuclear issue currently in discussion. Papers quote Secretary Rice as saying the letter "does not provide any opening" on the nuclear issue. The White House shrugged off the letter saying it was "useless propaganda." The mainstream press pointed to the religious tone of the letter, in which Ahmadinejad "invited Bush to religion."

Iran's Ambassador to Turkey, Firuz Dowlatabadi, went to Tehran following Larijani's meetings in Ankara to help prepare for the upcoming visit of Foreign Minister Gul to Iran.

Writing in Dunya newspaper, Zafer Atay notes that every high level Turkish official told Larijani that Iran should stop

escalating tensions and should convince the world that their nuclear program is only for peaceful goals. Zafer points out that although Iran has threatened serious retaliation if the US does attack, those threats may not be enough to deter the US as "the adventurous officials in charge in the US, the world's only super power, are ready to risk any action." Zafer continues that a "new war at Turkey's borders would damage its strategic and economic stability" adding that if the UN decides on sanctions against Iran, "Turkey would have to comply," finally concluding that "Turkey cannot afford to ignore nuclear proliferation in the region."

Fikret Bila writing in Milliyet contends that by attacking the PKK in Iraq and claiming that the US is negotiating with the PKK, Iran is clearly trying to create a wedge between the US and Turkey, sending Turkey the message that "Iran is doing what you want the US to do regarding the PKK issue; in your fight against the PKK, your ally is not Washington but Tehran." Bila argues that Iran's nuclear power is causing anti-American sentiments in the Muslim countries to increase as "Iran reiterates to the Islamic world that Iran's nuclear power belongs to whole Islamic world, and concludes "Iran's goal is to change the balance of power in the world. This goal is the biggest concern for the US and the reason why Tehran became a US target."

#### Erdogan Meets French Businessmen against Armenian "Genocide" Bill

All papers: On Tuesday, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan received 22 representatives of French companies operating in Turkey. During the meeting Erdogan requested support from the businessmen against the French draft bill which brings sanctions against denial of the "genocide" of Armenians by

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Ottoman forces in World War I, saying the approval of the draft bill could have an adverse affect on ties between Turkey and France.

The French representatives of noted companies such as Renault, Peugeot, Carrefour, Danone and Lafarge assured Erdogan that they opposed the bill, and that they have sent a letter to President Chirac and French lawmakers to scrap the draft. The draft bill to be voted in the French parliament on May 18 brings up to a year of imprisonment and a fine of up to Euro 45,000 for those who deny the "Armenian genocide." Milliyet reports nine Turkish intellectuals, known for their anti-government views in the Armenian controversy, had published a declaration in the French daily Liberation criticizing the bill. Turkish papers say Ankara is considering banning French and Canadian companies from bidding in state contracts, including projects for building nuclear power plants in Turkey.

A Turkish judge from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR,) Ali Ryza Turmen, said the French draft could be carried to the ECHR on the grounds that Article 10 of the European Human Rights Convention contains provisions protecting freedom of expression. On Tuesday, the government and the Turkish General Staff (TGS) decided to boycott "Maple Flag-06" international military exercises to be held in Canada on May 12 in response to the Canadian Prime Minister's recent statements regarding Armenian "genocide."

In remarks regarded by Turkish papers as a "veiled threat," the French Ambassador to Ankara reminded FM Gul that France was a member of the EU, and thus good bilateral ties were in Turkey's interest.

EU Ambassadors Concerned over Turkey's New Anti-Terror Bill  
All papers report the ambassadors of the European Union countries to Ankara on Tuesday expressed concern to Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul regarding Turkey's new draft anti-terrorism law and also the unrest in Turkey's southeast region. Gul hosted a dinner in honor of the EU ambassadors on Europe Day. The European ambassadors said many observers

believed the new anti-terrorism law would seriously harm and restrict civilian rights in Turkey. The new bill, which was speeded up following the recent resurgence of terror activities across Turkey, extends and redefines terror offenses. According to the draft, human and drug trafficking, blocking the right to education, influencing tenders, prostitution, pollution, and credit cards forgery may be treated as terror offenses. The Turkish Parliament is to discuss the bill today.

#### Sabancı Wants AKP Government to Tackle Structural Economic Problems

Omer Sabancı, the chairman of Turkey's elite business grouping TUSIAD said since it took power in 2002, the ruling AK Party government has successfully implemented the IMF-backed economic program, with Turkey's Central Bank pursuing a tight monetary policy. "The government's work on privatization and the restructuring of the banking system has been successful. However, we expect a single party government to move faster and firmer on structural problems such as the unregistered economy and regional underdevelopment in Turkey," Sabancı emphasized.

Murdoch to Buy "TGRT-TV," Christian Channel on Air in Turkey  
Vatan reports the American "media giant" Rupert Murdoch is bargaining with Turkey's Ihlas Holding Group of Companies to buy TGRT-TV for an estimated USD 140-200 million. Murdoch will reportedly turn the conservative/nationalist TGRT-TV into an entertainment channel.

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Hurriyet reports a Christian TV channel, Turk-7, kicked off broadcasts in Turkey through SAT-1 satellite. Turk-7 owners Fatma Unlu, a Turkish woman converted to Christianity, and David Middleton, an Irish citizen, said initial reactions coming mostly from non-Muslim viewers had been positive, but some newspapers were attacking them for launching Christian propaganda. Turk-7 broadcasts religious cartoons for children, Bible stories, and documentaries on the life of Jesus Christ for two hours a day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

#### TV Highlights

NTV (7 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to leave later today for Austria where he will attend the EU Presidents and State Leaders meeting tomorrow.

Erdogan will attend the EU-Latin America Summit as the special guest of Austrian Prime Minister Wolfgang Schüssel. Erdogan will meet his Austrian counterpart to discuss bilateral relations on Thursday on the sidelines of the EU-Latin America summit.

Austria is to hold a friendly match between a combined Europe team and a combined Latin America team on May 11 as part of activities to mark the hand-over of the EU term presidency to Finland. PM Erdogan, along with a former Turkish national team player, is to wear the jersey of the combined EU football team against a combined Latin America team in Vienna.

Upon completion of his Austrian visit, Erdogan will visit Indonesia to attend the D-8 summit to be held on the Indonesian island of Bali on 12-13 May.

- The AKP disciplinary board has decided to expel Fuat Gecen, lawmaker from Hatay province, from the party for claiming irregularities within the ruling party.

- The European Commission has again conveyed to the Turkish government EU concerns that Turkish reforms had slowed down.

- "Egitim-Sen" teachers' union accuses the ruling AK Party of instating party members in the Ministry of Education.

International News

- Iran claimed the US has moved a brigade to the Iraqi border with Iran for espionage activities.

- Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Nuri al-Maliki said he expected to establish a national unity government in the forthcoming days, ending five months of stalemate since the elections held in December.

- A car bomb killed 17 and wounded 35 others on Tuesday at a market in the Iraqi town of Tal Afar close to the Syrian border.

- The Israeli deputy PM Shimon Peres said President Ahmadinejad should be aware of the fact that Iran can also be destroyed.

- Greek opposition party PASOK sparked hot debates by nominating a member of the Turkish minority as a candidate for a key post in Western Thrace.

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